ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.	DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW
ED002506	N.A.	N.A.	

4. AUTHOR(S): McDonald, Christina

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: A Tentative Program for Combining the Education of Preschool Mexican-American Children with Parent Education

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: N.A.

7. EDITOR(S): N.A.

8. PLACE OF ORIGIN: ORG. El Rancho Unified School District, ST. Pico Rivera, Calif. CITY, STATE

9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: El Rancho Unified School District, Pico Rivera, California

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	N.A.	10/64	6

TELE. EXT. INST/LOC CODE

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE: YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED: YES ☐ NO ☒

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED: YES ☐ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT: PROPOSAL ☒ IN-PROGRESS ☐ FINAL ☐ FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

pre-school	Mexican-American children	school adjustment	
parent education	communication skills	child development	homemaking skills
health education	creative activities	cultural awareness	sensory experiences
		school-home relations	

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

At the heart of the educational and social status problems of the Mexican-American child is his critical need for the opportunity to come to school with his parents at the age of three to participate in a carefully planned program for his early childhood education, accompanied by a plan for the education of his parents.

Development of competency in the use of the English language at an early age is very important. Communication skills develop in a chronological pattern which begins in infancy From four to six years of age, the rate of growth in the functional use of language increases rapidly. The Mexican-American child needs to hear English spoken well; he acquires skill and a vocabulary by listening and imitating. If he is to have success in his initial experience with school, he must have an adequate background. Through this preschool program the child will also have opportunities for sensory experiences in art, music, science, physical activity, social living, and literature. He will learn good health habits, security in the school situation, and a respect for his cultural heritage.

The parent program will promote interest and cooperation with the school, increase parental understanding of the developmental tasks of childhood, and teach various homemaking skills. The operational organization and the daily program are appended.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. / PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

Culturally deprived

EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Pico Rivera, California

A TENTATIVE PROGRAM FOR COMBINING THE EDUCATION OF PRESCHOOL MEXICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN WITH PARENT EDUCATION

Submitted by:
Christina McDonald,
Curriculum Consultant, K-6

ED002506

I Statements of Need

"In order that the entire acculturative process as it affects the Mexican-American child be facilitated, and made a much more stable and smoother process within the frame of the original purposes (of Education In American Democracy), the following are imperatives:

1) The school-community idea be given greater depth in meaning better purpose and implementation;
2) To strengthen cultural awareness and self-image...
3) A definite and specific program of compensatory education be instituted with objectives of:
   a) supplementing the normal educative effort;
   b) preparing the Mexican-American child to compete within the existing education program."

This is the Statement of Philosophy and Policy as they pertain to the Acculturation and Education of the Mexican-American and recommended to Boards of Education, as proposed by the Ad Hoc Mexican-American Education Committee on Metropolitan Los Angeles 1963.

II Goals of the Program

At the heart of the educational and social status problems of the Mexican-American child is his critical need for the opportunity to come to school with his parents at the age of three to participate in a carefully planned program for his early childhood education accompanied by a plan for the education of his parents that will:

For the Child

1) Preserve and strengthen his sense of personal worth and confidence in himself.
2) Build a basic feeling of security through pleasant, satisfying experiences with the school plant, school personnel, and school equipment and materials. The success of these initial contacts will determine the extent to which the school will be able to function effectively in his life.
3) Help him in these early, formative years to develop the essential foundations for competency in the communication skills of the English language. This involves learning to speak basic English words correctly at the time when his oral language patterns are beginning to develop.

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Office of Education

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4) Offer many opportunities for first hand experiences with the world about him through investigating and experimenting and by thinking about relationships in his environment.

5) Provide many opportunities for him to express himself creatively and spontaneously through art and craft activities such as building, modeling, painting, music activities of rhythms and singing, and enriched language activities through conversation, storytelling, rhymes and dramatic play.

6) Involve him in many activities through which he will learn to work and play productively with other children and to achieve some degree of independence.

7) Provide a definite physical development program that will help the child learn to use and manage his body with more skill and a growing sense of achievement and confidence, and help him to develop healthful habits of play, rest, elimination and eating.

8) Offer many opportunities to enrich the child's experiential and informational background through excursions with teacher and parent, audio-visual equipment, picture books, large charts and resource people.

For the Parents

1) Lead parents to understand the basic developmental tasks of early childhood and the tremendous importance of fostering this development. This would include preparation for the child's entrance into the Kindergarten Program.

2) Promote parental faith and interest in the school as an effective resource for improvement of social and economic status.

3) Provide opportunities for parents to extend skills in the English language.

4) Help parents understand how they can encourage their children to learn and develop good study habits.

5) Offer courses in Health and First Aid to parents.

6) Provide for instruction in Foods and their preparation.

7) Provide opportunities for mothers to develop knowledge and skills in Clothing which would involve learning about fabrics and their care, sewing, and making alterations.

8) Offer a course in Consumer Education.

III Importance of Developing Competency in the Use of the English Language at an Early Age

Restricted knowledge of, and limited skill in the use of the English language are critically related to the educational problems of the Mexican-American child and to his successful social adjustment to the school. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that ability in the Language Arts is an excellent index to general educational achievement. Reading, as one area of the Language Arts Spectrum which also includes Listening, Speaking and Writing, is a basic tool for learning. Undergirding competence in the related areas of communication in the English Language is oral language power.

The communication skills develop in a chronological pattern that begins in infancy. Perhaps the greatest intellectual achievement of the first five years of a child's life is that of acquiring the rudiments of spoken language. To emphasize the importance of early childhood experience in language development, we need to review the Language Growth Continuum. In earlier development, the three year old has learned to use "first words" in simple combinations; he has begun to recognize language as a means of indicating and satisfying wants and needs for gaining satisfaction. From this stage, the three year old moves into the phase at which effective communication begins and he needs guided experiences to promote readiness for expressive language and for interpreting receptive communication. From four to six years of age, the rate of growth in functional use of the language increases rapidly, the child begins to sense more fully the meaning and use of verbal and visual symbols and there is an increasing need for planned reading readiness experiences. From the beginning, the language readiness programs of the Kindergarten proceed from the level of the child's ability to speak in phrases to the development of his ability to express ideas in complete sentences and to relate ideas expressed in sentences in proper sequence.

The language a child hears is the language he learns to speak. By listening and imitation, he acquires a sizeable vocabulary. The Mexican-American child needs to hear English spoken with high standards of pronunciation, usage, voice quality, and intonation. He needs to understand how changes in tempo and volume contribute to meaning. Before a child can get meaning from printed language, he must obviously be able to understand the spoken words and language patterns that print represents. One of the main responsibilities of a language program for four and five year olds is to "nail down" a core of language meanings--to make sure that children know the meanings of words they are using orally, that they use them with precision, and that they have in their oral vocabularies the words they will be expected to read.

In summary, if the Mexican-American child is to experience success in his initial experience with school at the Kindergarten level, he must have an adequate background of at least 400 basic words in his English speaking vocabulary which he can pronounce correctly and use with preciseness of meaning to express ideas and communicate with the other children and teacher. If the child lacks this basic English vocabulary, retardation is present from the very beginning of his formal school experience

.. and remedial and compensatory education must become immediately operative. Thus begins the history of tragic handicap and emotional frustration that by its accumulative action throughout the elementary and junior high school years produces the "dropout." Dr. Julian Samora, University of Notre Dame, in his address to the recent Orange County Conference on the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children and Youth, placed great emphasis on early detection and treatment of the dropout problem and the need for special instructional programs to develop skills in the use of the English language. Dr. Samora pointed out that the schools reflect community attitudes and that inequality produces feelings of inferiority. The Mexican-American child comes to school with all the courtesy, warmth and emotional sensitivity to the people and the world about him that are a part of his culture. He responds to creative activities in music and art that are indicative of his cultural heritage. His development into a friendly, talented, poised and successful adult with tremendous potential for contributions to the enrichment and improvement of our Nation is in direct relation to the attitudes and opportunities of his school and community.[1]

IV Operational Organization

Weekly Schedule

Program operates two days each week:

Tuesday and Thursday

Two sessions are offered on these days:

Morning Session: 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Afternoon Session: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

According to parental convenience, a mother and child would enroll and regularly attend the session selected. Mothers would be divided into two groups. On alternate days, one group of mothers would be assigned to assist the children's teacher with the children's small group work. The other group would be involved in parent education courses.

Staff

For the children:

One credentialed teacher with
1) Experience in working with Mexican-American people.
2) Experience in teaching Mexican-American children at the primary grade level.
3) Outstanding competence in teaching the language arts program.
4) Professional training in Early Childhood Education.
5) Able to speak Spanish.
6) Represents high standards in the English language to serve as a model.

Nurse

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1) Orange County Conference on the Education of Spanish-Speaking Children and Youth, sponsored by the California State Department of Education and the Orange County Superintendent of Schools, Garden Grove, February 14-15, 1964.

For the parents:
Resource specialists in the areas of course content.

Course Titles for Parents

Language Development of Pre-School Children
The Elementary School Child
Health and First Aid
Consumer Education
Clothing
Foods and Nutrition
Personal Grooming
English-Reading
How to Help Your Child Learn
Modern Math

Daily Program for Children

9:30-9:40 a.m. Arrival--Greeting by Teacher

Teacher greets each child cordially when he arrives, helps him remove wraps and assists him with his choice for the Individual Activities period which follows. The school nurse would need to be available to check on health problems that might arise.

9:40-10:10 Individual Activities

Indoor Play, Art and Music Activities such as:
Using hollow blocks to build a house, boat or airport.
Playing in the housekeeping, market or other centers for dramatic play.
Looking at picture books in the book corner or examining specimens in a science or nature area.
Caring for pets such as a bird, observing animals and plants.
Painting at an easel or using fingerpaint, clay, chalk or other creative media.
Experimenting with sounds and rhythms through use of simple musical instruments or other materials.
Listening to recordings.

10:10-10:50 Outdoor Play, Nutrition, Relaxation

Outdoor Play involving extensive use of a variety of equipment such as ladders, jungle gym, boards for walking, wagons, tricycles and sand box.
Toileting and Hand Washing
Midmorning Nutrition
Relaxation Period

10:50-11:20 Large and Small Group Activities

Emphasis on Language Development
Story Period
Picture Books
Films and Filmstrips
Songs
Dramatic play
Conversation
Charts-Study Prints
Recordings
Puzzles
Going on excursions with teacher and mothers assisting with small groups.

11:20-11:30 Departure

Teacher gives each child a friendly goodbye with a personal suggestion that will arouse his interest in plans for the next session.

The same format of time blocks could be repeated with the afternoon session.

Summary

Through this program, the Mexican-American child would have many carefully planned opportunities:

To develop the necessary communication skills in the English Language for successful performance at the Kindergarten level.
For sensory experiences in his environment as the basis for learning.
For experiences in art, music, science, play and physical activity, social living and children's literature.
To establish good health habits.
To develop a knowledge of the school plant, school personnel, supplies and equipment that will promote poise and security in school attendance.
To preserve and increase respect for his cultural heritage through recognition of cultural contributions of Mexican-Americans to our national life.

Jacob Landers, Coordinator, Higher Horizons, Board of Education of the City of New York, has concluded: "If we want to help all children, it seems inevitable that we must get them younger and keep them for a longer schoolday."[1]

1) Landers, Jacob, "The Higher Horizons Program in New York City," Program for the Educationally Disadvantaged. U. S. Office of Education, 1962, page 55.